

December 4, 2006  
Six o'clock P.M.  
North Little Rock City Hall Council Chambers  
300 Main Street  
North Little Rock, Arkansas

Mayor PATRICK HENRY HAYS convened the meeting at 6:05 p.m.

The following council members were also present: MARTIN GIPSON, NEIL BRYANT, LINDA ROBINSON, GARY BERRY, CHARLIE HIGHT AND MURRY WITCHER. Aldermen-elect DEBI ROSS and CARY GAINES were in the audience.

Mayor Hays reviewed issues regarding Electric Rates and Fee increases and said the city is looking at ways to reduce the city's dependency on the Electric Department. Comparisons to Entergy electric rates and the City of Little Rock business license fee schedule, and current discounts for North Little Rock customers were discussed. Mayor Hays briefly reviewed the proposed 2007 Budget and certain line items, sidewalk and street programs. Raises are not included for 2007. A copy of the 2007 Budget is in the City Clerk's Office if anyone wants to review it. State law mandates the budget be adopted by the end of January.

Mayor Hays convened the public hearing at 6:15 p.m.

Mr. Joe Waylan lives on Hazelwood and is retired from AP&L. Mr. Waylan suggested a gradual step increase in rates, not all at once. This would allow people time to prepare and would help low income customers.

Mr. Scott Miller lives on 5<sup>th</sup> Street in Argenta and has two business meters and agreed with the previous suggestion of a gradual increase. Mr. Miller asked why the increase would go into effect in January when the actual charge to the city wouldn't begin until July. He also suggested reviewing the Police and Fire Health contracts and consider reduction of sanitation services. Mr. Miller referenced Bankruptcy filings in the *Democrat Gazette*.

Mrs. Jane Gray Todd lives in Sherwood and is a North Little Rock Electric customer. Her mother is on a fixed income of \$650.00 per month. Mrs. Todd mentioned Project Deserve which assists low income families and asked the council to consider a similar program.

Mr. Joe Reynolds is an Entergy customer and agreed with a gradual rate increase for North Little Rock customers. Mr. Reynolds said instead of increasing privilege tax fees, the city should locate businesses which do not pay a fee. He also said the increase in fees for the Senior Center seemed high.

Mr. Matthew Richard lives in Argenta and referenced profits from electric rates and said the city should have relied less on electric revenue. Many people are unaware of the proposed increase and asked if customers would receive a notice.

Mrs. Lorene Joshua is on a fixed income and doesn't have a lot of money and said a lot of residents have to make a choice regarding medications, etc.

Mr. Waylan said the Public Service Commission would not allow a 30% rate increase. Mr. Waylan also referenced Project Deserve and said it is a good program, but not designed to supplement a persons incomes and said it provides for assistance one-time only.

Mr. James Ard referenced a council meeting when Duke was awarded the city's contract. Mr. Ard asked how Entergy could deny the city services. His mother is on a fixed income and would not be able to pay her bills without his assistance.

Pastor Nelson Watson is concerned about those who cannot afford the increase and asked if those who could afford the increase or General Funds be directed to provide assistance.

Mayor Hays discussed the date for the second City Council meeting in December, which will need to be rescheduled due to the Christmas Holiday schedule and said he would recommend Thursday, December 28, 2006 as the date.

Mayor Hays recessed the public hearing until the next regular meeting of the city council, Monday, December 11, 2006, at 7:05 p.m.

Note: a letter was distributed to the council from Mr. Steve Owen, North Little Rock Chamber of Commerce, Chairman of the Board re: modifications about the proposed utility franchise fees and increase in business privilege tax, concerns for businesses in North Little Rock. People who do business in the city and live in the city will have both business and residential rate increases.

Summarization prepared by Diane Whitbey, City Clerk and Collector